

Libby Community Advisory Group

Meeting Summary

October 14, 2004

Introductions

Gerald Mueller and members of the Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

Agenda

The CAG agreed to the following agenda for this meeting:

- CAG Membership
- EPA Report
- TAG Report
- ARD Net Report
- CARD Report
- Public Comment

CAG Membership

The CAG discussed its situation in light of the decreasing attendance by members and the audience in recent meetings. CAG members present and the audience at this meeting agreed that the CAG continues to provide a valuable and unique forum both to receive and discuss information from agencies such as EPA and guests such as the researchers from the University of Montana and for the public to have a voice in asbestos-related issues in Libby. Gayla Benefield agreed to draft a letter inviting the City, the County and other interests formerly represented on the CAG to renew their CAG participation. The CAG agreed to consider the letter at its next meeting as well as the specific agencies and organizations to which it should be sent. The CAG also agreed at its next meeting to reconsider its purpose and meeting frequency and to develop a work plan to identify specific issues to address at future meetings. The CAG also directed its facilitator to draft and issue a press release prior to meetings at which guests such as the UM researchers will make presentations. The press release will be sent to *The Western News*, *The Montanian*, and KLBC, the local radio station.

EPA Report

Peggy Churchill reported on behalf of EPA on the following topics.

Residential Cleanups - So far this year 116 properties have been cleaned compared to a goal of 170 cleanups. Now is the peak time for conducting the cleanups. Had the contracts been completed sooner, the peak period would have also been sooner, but the contract is now in place.

Flyway Cleanup - The cleanup of this property, which is being conducted by W.R. Grace, is 80 % complete. Digging on this site should be completed by next Friday. About three weeks of backfilling will then remain.

Railroad Cleanup - As mentioned at the last CAG meeting, Envirocon is conducting the cleanup of railroad property on behalf of the Burlington Northern-Sante Fe Railroad. EPA believes the cleanup is going well, and it should be completed within the next three weeks.

Compost Pile - The County has been operating a compost operation at its landfill. EPA recently sampled the compost pile and found asbestos. All asbestos concentrations were measured at less than 1%. Because asbestos was detected, EPA shut down the composting operation.

TAG Workshop - On October 5 and 6, EPA hosted a workshop in Denver for the Libby Area Technical Assistance Group (LTAG) and state and local agency personnel. Three representatives of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality attended as well as Gayla Benefield, LeRoy Thom, Gordon Sullivan, Mike Noble, and Abe Troyer from the LTAG and Ron Anderson from the Lincoln County Department of Environmental Health. In addition to EPA, representatives of the VOLPE Center, CDM and science advisors from other companies also participated in the workshop. The agenda included discussions of: the risk assessment; analytical methods, including the performance evaluation study of different analytical methods; and risk management, including the challenges involved with difficult issues such as carpets and walls. Workshop participants visited the Denver laboratory and viewed sample preparation and the different microscopes used in asbestos analysis. EPA expects that the workshop will provide a foundation for continuing technical discussions with the TAG.

Soil Samples - Soil samples taken during previous cleanups have now been analyzed, and a letter that will explain the sampling results is being drafted.

Post Clean-up Report - EPA has released a report assessing whether the residential cleanup has been successful and whether recontamination is occurring. Sampling was conducted at 31 properties, representing all different types of cleanups including attic insulation removal, instances in which carpets were removed or cleaned, and remodels. Air sampling included use of stationary and personal air samplers. Dust was also collected and sampled. All dust samples resulted in non-detects for asbestos, i.e., asbestos concentrations in all samples were less than detection limits. A total of five air samples (four stationary and one personal air) collected at four different properties showed detects of one Libby asbestos structure in each sample. Reported concentrations ranged from 0.0001 structures/cubic centimeter to 0.0002 structures/cubic centimeter). Based on the sampling results, EPA views the residential cleanups as a success.

CAG Member Question - Do you know how the compost pile at the landfill was contaminated?
Answer - We don't know for sure. Apparently prior to 1999, raw vermiculite may have been added to the pile.

CAG Member Comment - We need a firm answer as to the source of the contamination. The Phase II study did not look at lawn mowing. Grass clippings might have been a source.
Response - Vermiculite was visible in the compost pile.

CAG Member Question - Has the area across the river where railroad cars were loaded with vermiculite been cleaned?
Answer - No, EPA has not yet decided who or how this area will be cleaned.

CAG Member Comment - Someone should walk the track for five miles on either side of Libby looking for contamination.
Response - We will do so.

CAG Member Question - Concerning the post sampling report, when homes were revisited, did you conduct aggressive sampling?

Answer - No, the sampling was not the aggressive sampling conducted immediately after the cleanup for the clearance sampling. Sampling for the post sampling report was conducted as people went about their normal activities. Two of the properties sampled had undergone remodeling.

CAG Member Comment - To get an accurate picture of the success of the cleanup, the sampling should have been the aggressive sampling similar to that conducted in the clearance sampling.

Audience Member Question - At the last meeting, questions were raised about the priorities for the residential cleanup, including how vacant properties are handled. Have these questions been addressed?

Answer - This weeks Q&A published in the newspapers addressed this topic. We do not prioritize vacant properties. They are cleaned if they are in the queue and are near other houses being cleaned.

Audience Member Question - Two people are asking questions around town. Is this some sort of investigation, and can you tell us what it is about?

Answer - I cannot answer because of liability concerns. I will find out what information can be released about this subject.

TAG Report

Gayla Benefield and LeRoy Thom reported on behalf of the TAG on the following subjects:

Denver Workshop - Mr. Thom held up a notebook each participant in the workshop received. He stated that rather than trying to go through the workbook topics at this meeting, the TAG would set up informational meetings to explore them in more detail. He said that he was convinced by the workshop that EPA is attempting to develop better science and analytical tools to address Libby's asbestos problems. Also, participants acquired a better perspective on the roles in the cleanup of EPA and its contractors, including the Volpe Center and CDM, and on the cleanup overhead expenditures. He stated that he viewed the workshop as a big plus.

CAG Member Question - Could we duplicate the workshop here in Libby?

Answer - The TAG will discuss how this might be accomplished. We might invite some of the EPA personnel who took part in the workshop to Libby to meet with community members.

CAG Member Question - Can I get a copy of the workshop participant's binder?

Answer by Wendy Thomi - A copy is in the EPA Information Center, but we will also get you a copy.

CAG Member Comment - The TAG has received \$50 thousand for its next round of funding.

Gayla Benefield stated that EPA and all of the agencies participating in the workshop should be commended. She reminded all that the TAG meets on the second Tuesday of every month from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in room 212 of the college. At the last meeting, the TAG heard an explanation of the railroad cleanup. She stated that she commends BN-Sante Fe because it appears that the cleanup will result in a safe property when it is finished.

CAG Member Comment - I have been told that the railroad cleanup is leaving no stone unturned. I was skeptical. They are, however, cleaning beyond the railroad right-of-way to the north, west, and east. We should remember that the railroad was a non-suspecting victim. No one told them that they were shipping toxic materials, and the railroad cars were not so labeled. Also, earlier in this meeting, reference was made to shipping vermiculite in box cars. During the time that I was working for W.R. Grace, the railroad used two different types of cars for transporting vermiculite. Bagged Zonolite product was shipped from the export plant in box cars. Raw vermiculite was also transported across the river by a conveyor and dumped into bins. The bins then opened into hopper cars that were notorious leakers. This operation created a considerable amount of dust, and railroad ties in the vicinity of this operation were completely covered with dust.

ARD Net Report

Gayla Benefield reported on behalf of the Asbestos Related Disease Network (ARD Net). She stated that ARD Net has received a reply to its letter to Dr. Flynn of Health Network of America, the administrator of the W.R. Grace Medical Plan. She handed copies of ARD Net's letter and Dr. Flynn's reply. After people have a chance to review these letters, they can be discussed either at a CAG or ARD Net meeting.

Audience Member Comment - ARD Net has received its third round of grant funding and permission to carry over used funds from its current grant.

CARD Clinic Report

LeRoy Thom reported on behalf of the CARD Clinic. He stated that the CARD's application for \$250 thousand from the Lincoln Area Development Corporation (LADC) has still not been resolved. CARD has had scheduled, held, or postponed some ten to twelve meetings with LADC. This experience has been frustrating. Mike Giesey did present CARD's request to the City Council, which ultimately awards the funds in question.

Audience Member Question - Do you think that CARD will ultimately be successful in obtaining funding through LADC?

Answer - LADC had asked us to change our request for a grant to a loan, and we complied. Recently, LADC switched its position, so we again requested a grant. We met with LADC yesterday to make this request. We were told that we now have to start the process over again.

Audience Member Comment - The CARD Clinic appreciates the support from the community that we have had for our grant request to the LADC.

Public Comment

Audience Member Comment - I attended the City Council meeting at which Mr. Giesey made his presentation. I learned there that a petition has been circulating for a week requesting that the City Council no longer do business with the LADC. After only a week, fifty people had signed which is a significant number considering how few people were aware of it.

CAG Member Question to Alan Stringer - It was mentioned earlier that W.R. Grace was shipping toxic material without notification. When did W.R. Grace begin labeling the railroad cars as containing asbestos?

Answer by Alan Stringer - When I came in 1981, cars were labeled that they contained less than 1%

asbestos. Labeling began when the law so required.

Audience Member Comment - Last year we had sufficient flu vaccine so that we encourage everyone to get vaccinated. This year vaccine is in short supply both nationally and locally. This year, therefore, only the high risk population, for example people with asbestos-related disease and small children, will be vaccinated. People should take precaution against the flu by hand sanitizing, and covering one's nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.

CAG Member Question - Since elementary school children will not be vaccinated, can the means to sanitize hands be provided when they return to the class room?

Answer by Kirby Maki - We ask the children to wash their hands with soap before returning the class room; however, I will see what we can do regarding other means for hand sanitizing.

Audience Member Comment - I have heard comments around town that Libby does not have a radiologist. This is not correct. We have a radiologist here. What we do not have is a pulmonologist. I have also heard that a pulmonologist from Kalispell was discouraged from coming here. Does anyone know if this is true?

Answer by Gayla Benefield - I have not heard this before. Dr. Whitehouse who is a pulmonologist visits Libby.

CAG Member Question - On September 22, I wrote a letter to the editor. Does anyone on the CAG object if I ask Mr. Mueller to include a copy of the letter with the summary of this meeting?

Response - No one objected, so Mr. Mueller agreed to do so. The letter is attached below as Appendix 2.

Next Meeting

Because the second Thursday of November falls on Veterans Day, the next CAG meeting was scheduled for 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 10, 2004 in the Ponderosa Room of Libby City Hall.

Appendix 1
CAG Member & Guest Attendance List
October 14, 2004

Members	Group/Organization Represented
K.W. Maki	Libby Schools
Clinton Maynard	Area Asbestos Research Group
Ken Hays	Senior Citizens
Wendy Thomi	EPA Community Involvement
Peggy Churchill	EPA
LeRoy Thom	Former Grace Employee
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO
Eileen Carney	State Representative
Les Skramstad	Asbestos Victim (Alternate for Norita Skramstad)

Appendix 2

September 22, 2004

Is it in the best interest of Libby to have a Clinical Research Center based here? I would like to provide some examination of this question, but first one must ask another question. Is it in the best interest of W. R. Grace? This corporation may have to pay for the cleanup and currently dictate, through the Grace Medical Plan, what should be considered asbestos related disease and what should not.

Contrary to what many believe, W. R. Grace is still very much in the picture and it seems they are very much interested in controlling what takes place here in regard to past and future toxic exposure. As far as future exposure is concerned, when the federal judge in Missoula ruled in favor of EPA, that the cost of cleanup to that date should be shouldered by W. R. Grace, this responsible corporation was provided a huge stake in how much our Superfund cleanup will cost. I would add, that since the judge's ruling, it seems that cost has become a primary concern, weighing over what is adequately protective for our people. I'm not saying that the judge made a bad decision, but his ruling sets us up to do battle with those who would consider expenditure over cost in human health and life.

So what does the cleanup have to do with a research facility being established?

It is my opinion, based on much personal research and consultation with experts in the study of mineral fiber, that as hard as we may try, it will be nearly impossible to get a cleanup that will produce less than one cancer in 10,000 people. This number, one cancer in 10,000, is what the EPA usually considers to be the upper limit of "acceptable risk." It may be the case that we cannot even reduce the risk to what is allowed in the occupational setting, three cancers in 1000, as hard as we may try. While I am pleased each time I see a truckload of toxic material leaving town, I am greatly concerned that truckloads of this deadly material are deliberately being left behind because EPA has not yet been allowed to adopt policy that recognizes and utilizes the best available science. Current regulatory policy is outdated, as it does not consider toxicity difference among fiber types and is simply wrong. I don't fault the people from EPA who have been sent here to deal with this mess; they simply do what they are told to do by their bosses' bosses.

There has been a recent acknowledgment by some, that our Amphibole type asbestos fiber does not stay airborne for a very long time. EPA, to date, cannot tell us with any certainty just how long it does stay airborne and have, after much request, failed to produce this data. There is some evidence though, that strongly suggests, that it does not stay airborne for hours or days as does the commercial type asbestos. This explains why, with so much of this Tremolite series asbestos all around us, EPA has rarely detected fiber in the outside air in our town. They don't find it in our air because it does not stay suspended. This considered, one should question the EPA's assessment that the disease as seen in our town today was due to high level, ongoing exposure while the mine was operating. While historical pollution episodes resulting in total exposure to our people did with little doubt occur, past exposure may have been grossly overestimated. It may be the case that the effects of toxic exposure as seen are due to much less exposure than we have previously thought.

Exposures that occur today and in the future will largely be a result of people directly disturbing contaminated material, the tracking of contaminated soils into their homes and the leakage of vermiculite insulation from walls and attics into the living spaces where disturbances will be ongoing. Our fiber type becomes readily airborne when disturbed and it may take little exposure to cause disease.

We must have as thorough a cleanup as possible, far better than is currently being provided by EPA. It will be through research and policy change that we will get this right for ourselves and America. The clinical research, that can only come from an exposed population such as ours, is key. In addition to the knowledge that will help us stop further exposure, research might help healthcare providers to better assist the exposed in having a better quality of life, longer life, and hopefully cures.

There are a couple of things we need to acknowledge and we are quite certain about. It is not a requirement that a person have lung abnormalities seen on x-ray or to express symptoms for a person to be at risk of developing the incurable cancer, mesothelioma. All that is required is exposure, enough time for the disease to manifest and it seems, susceptible genetics. We've all heard that mesothelioma is a rare form of cancer, well; it's not rare in an exposed population like ours. With the exception of corporate interest, it is in the best interest for all to support and participate in the research to the extent that we feel comfortable.

Clinton Maynard